



CELEBRATING 19 YEARS OF MINISTRY

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Reachout Trust is an international Christian ministry that equips the church upholds biblical truth and builds bridges to people in the cults, occult and new age. We aim to:

Examine in the light of the Christian gospel the beliefs and spirituality of people within the cults, occult, new age and all not upholding biblical truth.

Train and equip Christians to explain the Christian gospel in a relevant way.

Provide a complete service of advice and help to all enquirers.

Present the Christian gospel.

Work with organisations who will help achieve these aims.

A detailed information pack that shows how you can be involved in this ministry is available from head office.

All unassigned articles are the responsibility of Doug Harris, Director of Reachout Trust.

Other articles may not necessarily represent the Trustees' belief in every small detail.

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WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

At a recent exhibition, I offended a lady because we had a book about the group she belonged to. This is not an everyday occurrence but it has happened before and it set me thinking.

If we are a Christian group, why should another Christian be offended by us? What right did I have to sell the booklet on our stand? Were we causing division by the books we were selling? I decided I needed to rethink and answer these questions again even though I had done them to one degree or another before.

First, I realised that it was not new for one Christian to be offended by another; there were examples of such in the New Testament and in Church history. What was important was that we did not use language that incited such offence and did not de-

liberately go out of our way to cause it.

Then to the trickier question of what right I had to sell the book on our stand with other cult literature, which appeared to be the main cause of offence. The woman did not feel that her group was the same as the Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons or other groups.

In answer to this question I need to underline again that we do not condemn the people we are writing about. Calling them a cult in our eyes is also not offensive when you use the Oxford dictionary definition of "a system of religious worship." The offence however is perceived because the people assume we are saying certain things, which we do not.

I believe that Biblically we do have a right to communicate why we think a group is not practicing true Christianity but has produced its own system of religious worship, which is a poor copy of the original. The way we do this should leave room to enable people to approach us and

show why they think we are wrong. The key to this is to be able to show clearly from the group's statement of faith and current actions that they are living according to the central doctrines of Christianity as clearly expressed in the Scriptures.

The two central pillars that we will always talk about is the person of Jesus Christ and Salvation. If a group is teaching other than what is revealed in Scripture as to Jesus CHRIST and CHRISTian salvation then they surely cannot expect to be called CHRISTian but rather noted as having a different system of religious worship.

The lady that spoke to me at the exhibition as many may have already thought was a Roman Catholic and the booklet was called "A Look Into Roman Catholicism." This was the group under discussion this time but the same circumstances refer to other groups too. The principle of dealing with it is always the same - check out the basic teaching of the group - show why their belief is different to the original Biblical message



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– build bridges of love in the way that we talk not brick walls of condemnation
– leave the person to check out the facts and make their own decision.

Interestingly in our catalogue we do not even put this booklet under the heading of cults but that of world religions but unfortunately the person concerned was too upset to read the book or to talk with me about it. If they had they would have discovered as we say on the opening page that:

We believe that the dogma of Rome is a cult but we also believe that there are true Christians within the Catholic Church. Let us first underline that we are *not* saying that Catholics are non-Christian. What we believe is that the dogma of Rome is a mixture of things that are from God and things that are from man. Individual Catholics can, and many probably do, have a personal relationship with God through Jesus but in the dogma of Rome there are cultic tendencies.

We are not dealing with an individual Catholic's walk before the Lord but we are questioning whether the world religion of Roman Catholicism is true Biblical Christianity or another system of religious worship. On this point, we received another letter from a Roman Catholic with a very different spirit and enclosed a book just in case there was anything that we misunderstood about the belief system. It is actually this book that has help convince me that the system know as Roman Catholicism is a different system of religious worship to the one discovered in the Bible.

I want to include in this article a few quotes that lead me to this conclusion as far as Roman Catholicism is concerned. The book is entitled *Catechism of the Catholic Church* revised edition published in 1999 by Geoffrey Chapman.

...all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body... Hence they could not be saved

who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it, or remain in it. - p.196

Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God... Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration... - p.277

Mary... was totally preserved from stain of original sin... taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession she continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation... Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of... Mediatrix. - p.114, 221

All who die in Gods grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification... The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification... This teaching is based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture (The Apocrypha) - p.235

Are we being offensive no, I believe that we are showing that these statements made by the Catholic Church are not the same as made by Scripture. Indeed this is a fact that many Catholics accept because they base their beliefs on Scripture *and* Tradition. Sadly a tradition that does not just explain Scripture but creates teaching that either adds or takes away from God's Word.

How can we be offensive by seeking to bring people back to the truth that is alone found in the Word of God? We are not being offensive but we do understand why Roman Catholics or whatever group we are talking about at the time feel that way because we dare to voice a difference to the teaching of the leadership of their choice.

People are also offended because they see this book among other groups that

are teaching a false gospel but is it not the case that the dogma of Rome as shown above is false when compared with the pure Word of God? Surely, the key in the end is whether what we say is true about the group or are we misunderstanding the teachings. If the latter we are always willing to listen to reasoned argument to show why we should change our thinking.

We do not want to offend in our words or attitude and we always seek to be positive rather than negative. If however in our seeking to communicate the truth we are sorry about the way people feel but do encourage each one to look at the facts before making an unformed judgement.

(end of article)

STATISTICS

The results of a survey published in the Sunday Telegraph towards the end of last year (28 November 1999) show the trend in certain religious thinking between the 1940s and the 1990s. One or two trends are of interest in our work.

BITS & PIECES

Belief in God as a spirit or life force has remained fairly constant at around 40% but belief in a personal God has dropped from 43 to 31%. Whereas around 26% still believe in a Devil, again a figure that is fairly constant but shows that Stan's tactics are good in that only 1 in 4 people actually thinks he exists.

This last statistic is interesting when you compare that the belief in ghosts has risen from 19 to 32%. Obviously no connection is made between the Satanic realm and most supernatural experiences. Belief in fortune telling has remained fairly constant at just under 50%, as has acceptance of reincarnation, which is around a constant 25%.

FRUSTRATION

Sometimes we get some frustrating letters and I wonder if I can use the following letter received at the beginning of July as an example.

Dear Reachout Trust, Just a short note to thank you for wasting my time regarding helping a friend see sense with Jehovah's Witnesses. His commitment to this faith/religion is now total, he regularly goes to a local kingdom hall and sees his friend (another Jehovah's Witness) more than he does me. I've written to you ASKING for help but it has not been forthcoming so I have decided to stop visiting him and let him get on with his 'new' life. Thank you VERY much, Mr M R Booth.

The big frustration is that there is no address on the small piece of paper this letter was typed on. Whether we did receive any letters before without addresses it is a possibility but we have no record and of course we cannot contact Mr Booth to help him without an address.

Please could we ask you for two favours – first if anyone knows Mr M R Booth please let him know the situation and second if you write to the Trust please ensure both your name and address is legible. If you have not received a reply to any letter with 14 days please contact us by phone, fax or email to discover if either the letter has not arrived or our reply has not been delivered. Outside of holiday periods most items are dealt with within 48 hours of receipt. 14 days would be the longest before an answer would be given.

BRAILLE BOOKS

We are very grateful to Pauline Croucher for arranging to get a number of our books published in Braille. Here is Pauline reading the newly delivered

copy of Mormonism – A Gold Plated Religion.

If you know any who would appreciate a copy of our books in Braille please do contact Pauline or Frank Croucher on 01923 250919 and they will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements.

Our publications available are:

- **Awake to the Watchtower – cat. no. 540638**
- **Mormonism – A Gold Plated Religion – cat. no. 563118**
- **Cult Critiques - cat. no. 550901**
- **Occult Overviews and New Age Agendas – cat. no. 550902**

Also available are:

- **Bondage Breaker – cat. no. 551517**
- **Understanding People – cat. no. 536762**

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

For any who might be interested we can now send a zipped copy of the web version of this newsletter. The cost would be £5 per annum and simply send your cheque with instructions to Head Office. If you also want to receive a printed copy too please send £10 per annum.

ZAMBIA

John Tancock who will be speaking at our annual convention this year regularly goes to Zambia to help the church there and often has to deal with cult matters. Zambia indeed has the highest percentage of Jehovah's Witnesses per head of population compared with any significantly sized country.

The network of churches that John goes to is called the Fire Baptised Churches of Zambia and many of its members are former Witnesses who long to reach out to those still in the Society.

John has written to us to say:

Frankly at the moment I have no funds to be able to release as my recent visit has cleaned me out! If you can help by providing:

- **Easily read literature for the general public about the dangers of the Watchtower.**
- **Any good material to provide Christians with information and teaching material about the key issues to hand.**
- **Tapes, videos etc all about Jehovah's Witnesses.**

These would be gratefully received.

If you have any of the above resources that you want to donate please send them direct to John Tancock West Cross Community Church 22 Westland Avenue West Cross Swansea SA3 5NR.

If however you want to send money to purchase materials, we are prepared to let John have them at cost. If you would in this case send the money to Reachout Trust marked clearly for Zambia, we will send any materials on. Please also consider when you give if it can be made a Gift Aid Donation as described on the back of this newsletter.

NEW BOOK

One of our regular supporters Allan Horsfield has recently written a 300-page book entitled The Four Horsemen of John's Apocalypse. The book goes beyond the scope of the work we are involved in and therefore we will not be stocking it but I want to mention it because it does have some interesting insights into Islam.

The back cover reads in part:

In this exciting new commentary Allan Horsfield unfolds a uniquely original interpretation of the text, placing it firmly in the context of twentieth century history without assailing the theological stronghold of John's vision. The Four Horsemen, usually seen as minatory instruments of God's plan, are forcefully presented as symbols of the most demonstrably destructive forces prevailing in the modern world.

For any who would like to purchase a copy of this book send £9.95 including p&p to:

**Tiger & Tyger
Unit 9 - Ormskirk Industrial Park
Old Boundary Way
Burscough Road
Ormskirk L39 2YW
Tel: 01695 575112**

(end of article)

UNITARIANS

BACKGROUND

Unitarians can trace their roots back to the 16th Century. The belief spread from Poland, to what was then Transylvania (Romania), through England and on to America where it especially thrived in New England.

Michael Servetus seems to be considered the founder of the movement. Servetus a Roman Catholic Spanish physician escaped from the inquisition in France and went to Geneva. Here in 1553 he was burned alive after a three-month trial into his anti-Trinitarian beliefs.

Servetus discovered that in the uncorrupted Greek New Testament there was no text to justify the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. He published two books arguing that Christians should bring their views of God and Jesus into conformity with Jewish and Muslim monotheism. Hence the word "Unitarian" - God as unity, or one" - Canadian Unitarian Council Website

These beliefs sometimes known as Sabelianism were to become known as Socinianism after Italian born Faustus Socinus. He developed anti-Trinitarian belief into a more organised teaching. At this time he was living in Poland and his followers were sometimes called the Minor Reformed Church. Forced out of Poland again by persecution many merged with the Unitarians in Transylvania and from there the belief spread to England.

Unitarianism flourished in Britain thanks to a man by the name of John Biddle and in 1925 the British and Foreign Unitarian Association was formed. Yet, whatever had gone on before there is no question that it experienced rapid growth at the end of the 18th century in America. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, leaders of the American Revolution, were all Unitarians. Boston, Massachusetts became the centre of activity with the teachings of such men as Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Ellery Channing.

We also here need to mention more recent American history. Here the Unitarians merged with the Universalists to form in 1959 a single movement called the Unitarian-Universalist Association.

Universalists are marked out by their belief that God will save every human being and that there is no such thing as eternal punishment. John Murray founded the first Universalist church in America in 1779 under the name of the Independent Christian Church.

Historians of the Unitarian movement tell us that there were three distinct phases of development:

From 1800-1835 when their leaders still accepted supernatural elements of Christianity and strongly defended Christian biblical beliefs against its critics.

1835-1885 which saw an end to this agreement and doctrines of the freedom of the human soul and the centrality of reason were predominant.

1885 to today which saw the full secularisation of belief, that enabled the Unitarians and the Universalists to combine.

BELIEFS

As could be expected with such a developing church their beliefs have also changed over the years. However, what is recorded here is what the official Unitarian Church believes today. The following definitions are taken direct from Cliff Reed's book, *Unitarian, What's That?*, 1999, (available on the Web and in many Unitarian Churches.) The reason is so that we are quoting what the Unitarians say and not what we say about them. We will in some cases make comment.

God

'God' is a very subjective word. Unitarians recognise this and do not presume to define God for others. We believe that everyone should be free to encounter the Great Mystery for themselves without mediator or veil. However, most Unitarians would use the word "God" to signify that which they believe to be of supreme worth."

Therefore to a Unitarian God is simply whatever man makes Him and not what He has revealed Himself to be.

Jesus

Unitarians believe that Jesus was a

man, unequivocally human. It has long been our view that to talk of him as God is unfaithful to his own understanding of himself. The New Testament accounts describe a Jewish man, chosen, raised up, adopted and anointed by God. They claim that the divine purpose was that Jesus should reconcile first the Jews and then all humanity to each other and to God. This would prepare the way for the Messianic age of peace...Whatever Jesus' own perception, his followers - like him, all faithful Jews - believed him to be the Messiah, "the anointed one"; in Greek, "the Christ". Today's Unitarians are not first-century Jews. We cannot share their perspective. However, Jesus' teachings and what we know of his life lead Unitarians to regard him as a major (some would say *the* major) figure in humanity's spiritual journey. While honouring him we do not worship him, something we believe he would not have wanted.

This is amazing, eyewitnesses of Jesus saw who He was but the Unitarians do not want to believe that. They also are ready to ignore His own words when He clearly claimed to be God (See John 20:28 for an example.)

Holy Spirit

Unitarians do not see any differentiation between the Holy Spirit and God, and use the words more or less interchangeably. We conceive of the Spirit as the active divine presence in individuals and communities, as the divine breath that gives us life, as that ineffable factor that binds us together. The Spirit, for many Unitarians, is the divine mystery moving among us and within us as we work and worship. Indeed, for many, God as loving, creative Spirit is the primary concept of the divine.

This again is not the Biblical revelation and not how Jesus spoke of the Spirit.

Salvation

It must be said that many Unitarians are wary of the word "salvation". We find some of its associations in mainstream Christianity unhelpful. How-

ever, whether we use the word or not, Unitarians tend to see salvation in this worldly rather than other-worldly terms... love becomes manifest only in human beings and their relationships. So all those people who bring mercy and reconciliation, liberty and justice into the world are the embodiments of salvation. They are the "saviours" within humanity.

Unitarians only therefore have hope in this life and are lost as far as eternity is concerned.

Afterlife

Unitarians hold a wide variety of beliefs on this subject. Some have a very firm belief in personal survival beyond death, and cite evidence to support it. Others - probably most - are less categorical, perhaps believing that in some way all that constitutes a human being continues to exist after death. However, they would not wish to be specific about how, where or in what form. They might talk in terms of the soul or spirit returning to God. They might say that the essence of a person is re woven into the spiritual life of the universe, just as the body's constituents are reworked into the universe's physical dimension... Unitarians take the view that, in any case, the focus of our attention should be this world. Our concern is better directed to considering how we should live our lives in the here and now. A life well-lived is the best preparation for death, what-ever may lie beyond it.

Again, we see the tragedy of the Unitarians position of no eternal hope. They simply live for this life and are willing to take their chances in the next.

Bible

Unitarians see the Bible as the record of a people's long struggle to understand themselves, their world and their God. In it the writers describe and interpret the spiritual dimension of their existence and their history. In the insights, stories and experiences that the Bible's human authors record, we can learn much in our own quest for faith and meaning. Where we find in scripture a source of sustaining and abiding truth, it can be said to be a source of divine wisdom. But Unitarians do not approach the Bible uncritically or without discrimination. Nor do we regard it as an inerrant and unquestionable authority. What it says must be viewed in the

light of reason and conscience. Due regard must be given to the continuing discoveries of biblical criticism, serious scholarship and archaeology. Anything in the Bible that Unitarians accept as true is accepted because it rings true in our own humble reflection upon it. We do not accept it just because it is in the Bible.

This attitude toward the Bible I believe explains where most of their teaching comes from.

Man

Unitarians take a scientific and evolutionary view of human origins. We regard the biblical creation stories as myths. As myths, though, they still have value. In them are expressed deep and perceptive insights into human nature and our place in world. However, a hard and fast view of human nature is precluded by the incompleteness of our knowledge. We have a long way to go in our exploration of human origins, biology, sociology and psychology. Generally speaking, though, Unitarians share a positive view of human nature and human potential... We have little time for the doctrines of "original sin" and inherited guilt. Rather we see human beings as having inherent and equal worth. This is regardless of all such differences as race, gender, class, creed, or sexual orientation. Unitarians affirm that all human beings originate in the Divine Unity, all have something of God in them, all are alive with the same divine breath.

A clearly defined man-centred belief and not a Christ centred one.

PRACTICE

The Canadian Unitarian Council describes the lifestyle on their website as

...a religious community where the binding covenant includes support for the individual in his or her own search for meaning and truth... a gathering point for those who reject creeds and dogmas in favour of an open and unfettered exploration of religious traditions... a life-affirming religion with values validated in this life, not in some place of future reward or punishment

They go on to say that the people joining them must amongst other things be those who:

are eager to consider religious questions with people who are not always

sure they have the answers.

Many would act in the same outward way as a Christian by 'going' to their meeting on a Sunday and listening to a 'sermon'.

The Aberdeen Unitarian Church website informs us that

Worship is normally conducted by our Minister and will usually consist of music, hymn-singing led by the choir, readings from inspirational works of world literature, prayers, children's story and an address. There is however no fixed order of service and the pattern may change from time to time. Tea/coffee and biscuits are served after the service. The mood is generally relaxed and informal.

We also read on another Unitarian website

As an open religious fellowship, Unitarians are united by simple services of worship, shared commitments to action, and social events. The key concept in our worship is the original meaning of the word; that is celebrating the most important values and events of significance in our lives. Congregational worship which usually takes place on a Sunday in a church or similar building need not necessarily follow the traditional patterns. Thus worship may include hymns, prayers/meditations, readings and periods of silence, but can also include less conventional elements such as modern music, dance or poetry as well as elements drawn from other religious traditions. The shape of worship is determined as much by the views and needs of the congregation as by the experience and talents of their minister or other person leading the service. Many of the places used for worship are several hundred years old and some of them are listed buildings, but some of the smaller congregations meet in rented rooms or each others houses. Socialising after the service also plays an important part in a Unitarian's week.

Special services may mark dates in the Judaeo-Christian calendar, important festivals of other faiths, or events of general significance to humankind (such as United Nations Day or Gandhi's birthday).

Unitarians also have special services to celebrate important points in the cycle of life - birth, naming, marriage or commit

(Continued on page 10)

WATCH THE OWER

Many might be expecting an article on blood but I felt at the moment enough had been said about it and in any case, we are keeping right up to date with events on our web site. Instead, for a change I am including something many ask that we do from time to time - a testimony. This is the first part of Anne Hillsdon's story.

I believe that the combination of evidence... reveals why it is reasonable to say that sensitive and emotionally fragile persons in particular are at risk in what is called a "spiritual paradise" - In Search of Christian Freedom, Ray Franz

One thing I do know - whereas I was blind, now I see. - John 9:25

Recently, I became a Christian. Not so earth-shattering a move, one might think, even in this age. But for me, it was a happening as dramatic as anything I have experienced. There are problems in relating my story, insofar as I have still to come to terms with the bitterness in discovering that the religion I believed was my salvation proved to be an empty vessel.

Before I tell you how it began, you will need a little background. I have not attempted to explain the doctrines of the Watchtower Society in detail but for the benefit of the reader who is not familiar with the terms, I list below the major beliefs of the Society.

The Great Battle of Armageddon fought between Jehovah and Satan will take place "very soon." There will be survivors, but only those who are baptised, active Jehovah's Witnesses.

There are two tiers of Witnesses. The few, the "144,000" mentioned in the book of Revelation are chosen to live in heaven with Jesus. The remainder, and majority, the "Great Crowd" will live forever on earth provided they have remained faithful to the organisation up to the time of Armageddon. (There is no salvation without the organisation). These ones will then face a further test of their integrity after 1000 years of par-

adise.

The date of 1914 is pivotal to the foundation of Watchtower teachings. It is the date of "Christ's invisible presence" and is reached by complicated chronology involving the book of Daniel and "seven times."

The Governing Body in Brooklyn USA controls the organisation, a dozen or so men purporting to be members of the anointed class of Christians. They are responsible for all doctrines and policies. As members of the anointed class are presumed to be baptised before 1935 the Body consists mainly of elderly men. Although the anointed class as a whole are purported to be the "faithful and discreet slave," a Witness would normally apply this term to the Governing Body.

All Jehovah's Witnesses must accept the teachings of the Society without demur. Independent thinking is not allowed and is liable to attract the attention of the Judicial Committee, consisting of elders of the Kingdom Hall. These committees have the power to disfellowship (ex-communicate) for a wide variety of reasons ranging from immorality to displaying a Christmas card.

The Watchtower Society practices "shunning" of members and former members of the organisation who have disagreed with any doctrine. This involves severing all contact with friends and family members, including parents and children. A Jehovah's Witness who does not follow this practice is himself threatened with disfellowshipping.

The doctrine of the Trinity is stringently denied by the organisation as pagan in origin. The cross of Christ is not recognised and "hell" is the common grave. There is no immortal soul and in the resurrection, Jehovah will re-create the human form in an identifiable manner.

Blood transfusion is classed as "eating of blood" and an offence such as accepting or sanctioning a blood transfusion under whatever circumstances is

liable to disfellowshipping.

Jesus is a creation of Jehovah, and remained purely a man until the day of his baptism. He is also the Archangel Michael.

I was born during World War II, the result of a brief and immediately regretted liaison. I remained a source of embarrassment and irritation to my mother, who had married "respectably" and given birth some years later to a half-brother for me. Where my mother was loud and brash, I was quiet and very shy. Where she was impatient, I had a feeling for the underdog. She bloomed with health, and I was frequently ill. She revelled in her men friends and I was withdrawn in the presence of the opposite sex. I blossomed academically when she boasted of never having read a newspaper. Both she and my stepfather found me an unsatisfactory daughter. They found solace in their small son, and I too adored this little boy, forever into scrapes. In his early childhood, he would toddle behind me wherever I went.

This, then, was the setting for the day in 1954 (I was eleven years old) when my mother accepted the offer of three books from a lady who called at the door. A Bible study was begun and whilst I was not allowed by my mother to be present, I listened curiously behind the door and was fascinated by what I heard. Very soon, a loving Jehovah - for that it seemed was the name of God) would make a paradise earth for us all to live on. We would not go to heaven - that was reserved for a few Jehovah's Witnesses, but we would never grow old or die and we could play with the wild animals all day long - although of course, they would no longer be wild. Perusing the books in secret, I found illustrations of wonderful gardens with tropical blooms and a little girl holding a colourful bird on her hand. Another child was playing with a tiger cub, while the mother looked on peacefully. All we had to do was love God and tell other people what he had promised us, and wait for the battle

between Jehovah and the Devil, which was coming "very soon." I was startled to learn that Jesus had not died on a cross but an upright stake, but pleased to discover we would not go to hell, because it did not exist. To my dismay, mother discontinued her study after a few weeks but I took my little courage in both hands and approached the "Bible lady" to ask whether she would teach me. I was surprised to receive permission, but from then on, I went to Sister Jean's house twice each week and learned more of what Jehovah had in store for those willing to obey him. Who would be stupid enough to refuse? Nevertheless, I was told millions would turn away from "the good news of the kingdom" and they would die at Armageddon. I hoped I would not have to watch all this death and was disconcerted to be told the scriptures said we would all have to clean up the dead bodies. A few months later, it was all right, because the "birds of the air" would do it instead. This was "new light" from Jehovah.

Before long, I was introduced to the Kingdom Hall. This was a new, rather bare building without windows and there was no decoration as I had seen in Sunday school, and certainly no cross, which was of pagan origin. The congregation was then quite small and dominated by members of the "anointed class" of Witnesses who would go to heaven to reign as kings with Jesus Christ for eternity. I was terribly in awe of these men (there were few women). Most had come out of "Babylon the Great", the world empire of false religion, for all churches were part of this, led by Satan. Several of the anointed had been ministers or lay preachers reared in the tradition of hell-fire and damnation for sinners.

The meetings - five a week - seemed interminable to a 12 year old, lasting up to three hours with a short break in the middle of the public talk and study of the main article in the Watchtower magazine. The male speakers (women were not permitted to teach) seemed to have a nice appreciation of their own worth because the meetings frequently overran the allotted time. No one protested, and I would not have dared. Much of the content of the organisation's teachings went over my head but what I did understand I never doubted. If Sister Jean, whom I loved very much, believed, then so did I. Much was made at these meet-

ings of "the fear of God" and into my head came an image, which lasted most of my life, of a Great Jehovah who was dark, angry and forbidding, and who could only be placated by "works." Faith without works, we were often told, was dead.

In time, I was introduced to the door-to-door work, accompanying always an adult Witness. I was far too shy to try to preach the "good news" by myself, though I was very proud to fill in my first report form listing the hours I had spent witnessing, despite rarely venturing anything beyond a timid greeting. These reports were forwarded to the headquarters of the Society and appeared in the Yearbook, so they were very important.

Baptism came when I was 13 and took place in a hired swimming pool during a district assembly. The first immersion failed as I was so nervous and had to be repeated. At the time of my baptism, I understood so little of what was happening I thought that after Armageddon we would all be naked and live in mud huts. Being very shy still, I did not like the idea of being naked at all, but presumed Jehovah would programme our minds so we would not notice.

The great scandal that split the congregation came shortly after my baptism. The teenage son of Sister Jean had fallen in love with a married Witness many years his senior and upon the situation being discovered, the boy had committed suicide. His funeral was a cold and bleak affair - there was no funeral talk and no comfort for the bereaved mother, who was told that her only child would be denied a resurrection from the God of perfect love for the sin of taking his own life. In the ensuing weeks, the congregation became a hotbed of gossip and innuendo, many members not speaking to others, and a brother from Bethel headquarters arrived to sort matters out. It was a bewildering and upsetting time, for I did not know to whom I should or should not speak, in case I offended.

Matters finally settled in the congregation, but not for me. My unhappiness at what was happening at home had been increasing, and I ran away. I was promptly returned to the fury of my parents, who told me they could not live with the disgrace, and the anger of the congregation committee, who casti-

gated me for my sin towards my parents and Jehovah. No-one thought of asking a troubled young girl what had been happening at home and I was too terrified of having to appear alone before a committee comprised solely of men to be able to utter a single word.

The committee placed me on a period of probation, which meant that I had to prove myself spiritually repentant over a period of 12 months, after which they would review the situation. This decision was announced publicly to the congregation and I felt terribly alone. I was not fifteen years old.

The inevitable happened - meeting attendance, on which the organisation placed great emphasis - began to fall away and a continual stream of visits from the "anointed" caused me to understand that I was relinquishing my hold on everlasting life. The nightmares, which were to plague me most of my life began and I became very nervous. My schoolwork was affected and I performed badly in my examinations. A kind teacher tried to talk to me, but I could not respond. I did not return to the Kingdom Hall and I was disfellowshipped for breaking the terms of my probation.

The following two years were frantic. Insomnia became a part of my life and I would spend the night hours reading with a torch under the bed-covers. I was at a disadvantage as far as normal teen years were concerned, as the last four years had been taken up entirely with meeting attendance and the door-to-door work. When a young man asked me out, I determined to marry him as soon as possible and have babies. After all, Armageddon was just around the corner and I was condemned by the organisation to die.

At the age of 20, I had acquired a husband and two of the babies I wanted so much. After the birth of my son, I suffered from post-natal depression combined with scenes of Armageddon and I thought I was going out of my mind. I had been shown Watchtower literature as a child portraying people and children dying horribly by falling into great chasms at Armageddon and I began seeing these images in my dreams. I knew that Jehovah was going to annihilate children along with their unbelieving parents, and I had to take responsibility for my little ones. I had made a geo

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TRUTH RESTORED - 24

BY MIKE & ANN THOMAS

MORMON LEADERS TALK "ROT"

In a recent correspondence with a pro-Mormon organisation on the Internet we were surprised to find our pro-Mormon correspondent labelling the remarks and pronouncements of LDS leaders as "Rot". The relevant quote is reproduced below. To read it in its context visit the Reachout web site where the full correspondence is available.

Your interest not in what the LDS Church embraces as official doctrine, but in the unofficial and often spurious "everything else," is quite disappointingly revealing. You obviously have no interest in understanding what Latter-day Saints truly believe, but are simply rooting around in the refuse dump of religious speculation for whatever stray bits of filth or contaminated rot you may find to hold up as "representative" of that faith, even though such samplings are clearly not. - Darryl Barksdale, President, *Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research*

This is an interesting word picture. How many times have Mormons said that the General Conference (and other) talks found in the Journal Of Discourses are "speculation"? Is the King Follet Discourse, in which Joseph Smith taught that God is an exalted man, "stray bits of filth or contaminated rot"? What about Brigham Young's General Conference address wherein he taught that Adam was God? Are these examples of "unofficial and often spurious 'everything else'"? Or maybe we should look at the most recent General Conference addresses. Should we call these talks "rot" rather than teachings of the living prophets? We could be persuaded.

It does seem remarkable that Mormons insist we use reliable sources for true LDS doctrine and then call those sources, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, George Q Cannon, Bruce R McConkie, Gordon B Hinckley et. al. unreliable. It seems that the sayings of the so-designated living prophets of the Mormon Church is a reasonable place to

look for the teaching of true LDS doctrine. It is most certainly "honest and even-handed" to look where the authority is claimed to be.

In a recent Conference address the Mormon Apostle, Dallin Oaks had the following to say:

The subject being taught in the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies of the church during the second and third Sundays of each month is the Teachings of the Presidents of the Church. During the last two years we have studied the teachings of President Brigham Young. For the next two years we will be studying the teachings of President Joseph F. Smith, the 6th LDS President. *The books containing these teachings, which are being given to every adult member of the church as a permanent personal library resource, contain doctrine and principles. They are rich and relevant to the needs of our day, and they are superb for teaching and discussion.* (Ensign, Nov. 1999, page 80)

PROPHET, SEER, REVELATOR?

In an earlier Conference address, *Ensign, November 1998, pp. 82/83*. Merrill C Oaks spoke of *The Living Prophet: our Source of Pure Doctrine*. We commend it as a classic example of how Mormons are encouraged to think about their prophets and leaders. He quotes Spencer W Kimball thus:

Since that Momentous day in 1820, additional scripture has continued to come, including the numerous and vital revelations flowing in a never-ending stream from God to his prophets on the earth... There are those who would assume that with the printing and binding of these sacred records [and he was speaking here of the four standard works] that would be the 'end of the prophets'. But again we testify to you that revelation continues and that the vaults and files of the Church contain these revelations which come month to month and day to day. We testify also that there is,

since 1830 when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, and will continue to be, so long as time shall last, a prophet, recognised of God and his people, who will continue to interpret the mind and will of the Lord. - *Revelation: The Word of the Lord to His Prophets, Ensign, May 1977, 78 Quotes in [square brackets] in original).*

Elder Oaks goes on to say:

We have large amounts of written historical material available to us, including sermons of early Church leaders. These give us background that helps us understand the early events of the Restoration...

Then goes on to promise:

There are wonderful continuity and agreement of these teachings and those of the current prophets.

It seems reasonable to draw from these statements certain conclusions, i.e.

That the four "Standard Works" (Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price) are not the only authoritative sources of Mormon doctrine.

That the Lord continues to speak to and through his prophets "day to day".

That these prophets can be relied upon to "interpret the mind and will of the Lord".

That there is "a wonderful continuity and agreement" between former prophets and leaders, and current ones.

Add to this the words of Dallin Oaks quoted above and it seems that people are encouraged to expect that transparency, clarity and continuity are the normative experience of those following Mormon leaders via the media of LDS Scripture, LDS historical documents and LDS Church manuals. The next time you quote one of these sources only to be told that your information is "unreliable" you have it on the highest authority that you are quoting "rich and relevant [sources of] doc-

trine and principles"" that are "superb for teaching and discussion".

PROPHETS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

Another claim from the same correspondent is that:

The policies and procedures of the Church have evolved quite significantly since the prophet Joseph organized the Church in 1830. Back then, the structure and organization of the Church was in its infancy. It was refined and crafted by the Lord, as the Church grew, by revelation through his living prophets, as can be seen throughout the Doctrine and Covenants.

This paints a popular, if mythical, picture of the Mormon Church growing and developing, achieving maturity, 'crafted by the Lord'. This development, it is claimed, can be seen throughout the Doctrine and Covenants and is viewed as standing in stark contrast to the static and spiritually dead churches of "Christendom". This is how every Mormon fondly thinks of his/her church.

If we study the latest edition of the D&C, 1981 edition, we note that the 'revelations' contained therein have in common the fact that they purport to be the voice of God, i.e. "Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high..." (D&C 1:1) "A REVELATION of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith Junior... Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church..." (D&C 84:1-2) "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph..." (D&C 132:1) "The Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West..." (D&C 136:1, Given through Brigham Young).

After this last entry, dated January 14th 1847, the only entries are Section 137, a 'vision' dated 1836, and Section 138, a 'vision' dated October 3, 1918. It seems, then, that 1847 saw the last church-developing revelation in the Mormon Church. That is a gap of 153 years. Inevitably a Mormon will mention the 1978 revelation on Priesthood and indeed the Doctrine and Covenants contains a 'Declaration' to the effect that such a revelation had been received - but no revelation. This is also the case with the infamous 1890 Declaration on

polygamy, reversing a so-called eternal principle. A Declaration but no revelation. Where is the revelation in the Mormon Church? Even if we were to be generous and allow that these declarations are revelation we still have 136 revelations from 1830 - 1847 and then 5 from 1847 - 2000. Not a "Thus saith the Lord", not a "Hearken, O ye elders of my church", not a peep from "the voice of him who dwells on high" for 153 years.

How does this record compare with the assurance of modern prophets that:

Since that Momentous day in 1820, additional scripture has continued to come, including the numerous and vital revelations flowing in a never-ending stream from God to his prophets on the earth...revelation continues and that the vaults and files of the Church contain these revelations which come month to month and day to day. We testify also that there is, since 1830 when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, and will continue to be, so long as time shall last, a prophet, recognized of God and his people, who will continue to interpret the mind and will of the Lord" (See above)?

Or with our correspondent's more specific claim that:

The policies and procedures of the Church have evolved quite significantly since the prophet Joseph organized the Church in 1830. Back then, the structure and organization of the Church was in its infancy. It was refined and crafted by the Lord, as the Church grew, by revelation through his living prophets, as can be seen throughout the Doctrine and Covenants.

Where in the Doctrine and Covenants? The truth is that Mormons are simply holding onto the cherished but delusory belief that something is there when in reality it patently is not.

MORE ON TESTAMENT

The Mormon *Ensign* magazine has taken to quoting the Mormon president frequently over recent years. It is nice that they have a president healthy and *compos mentis* enough to be worth quoting. In the June 2000 *Ensign* he is quoted as saying of the Book of Mor-

Believe in the Book of Mormon as another witness of the Son of God. This book has come forth as an added testimony to the world of the great truths concerning the Master as set forth in the Bible. The Bible is the Testament of the Old World. The Book of Mormon is the Testament of the New World, and they go hand in hand in testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. - *Ensign*. June 2000, pp.18/19

In the last Quarterly we pointed out that "Testament" in Bible terms does not mean testimony but covenant. We further observed that the use of the word "Testament" in referring to the Book of Mormon is designed to give it a respectability by association with the Bible, a respectability that is not deserved. We have already heard about missionaries who have sought to defend this use of the word. Helpful readers have contacted us with stories and useful contributions to the debate. You may find the following helpful.

In consulting Vine's Expository Dictionary we found the following simple entry under the word Testament: *For TESTAMENT see COVENANT*

Easton's Bible Dictionary helpfully clarifies the NT use of the word:

Testament: occurs twelve times in the New Testament (Heb. 9:15, etc.) as the rendering of the Gr. diatheke, which is twenty times rendered "covenant" in the Authorized Version, and always so in the Revised Version. The Vulgate translates incorrectly by testamentum, whence the names "Old" and 'New Testament," by which we now designate the two sections into which the Bible is divided.

Nave's Topical Bible gave the following information:

TESTAMENT: A will: Heb 9:16-18

The new: Mt 26:28; Mr 14:24; Lu 22:20; 1Co 11:25

See COVENANT

Testament occurs in the following verses in the NT:

Mat 26:28; Mar 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1Cr 11:25; 2Cr 3:6; 2Cr 3:14; Heb 7:22; Heb 9:15; Heb 9:16; Heb 9:17; Heb 9:18; Heb 9:20; Rev 11:19 .

We will look at four key verses:

Matt.26:28 and Luke 22:20 recount how

the Lord, the night before he died, "took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new Covenant (testament) in my blood".

1 Cor. 11:25 is Paul's account of that same event, an account he claims he "received from the Lord" (v.23) in which he repeats the words, "This cup is the new covenant (testament) in my blood".

2 Cor. 3:6 is Paul's account of his ministry wherein he refers to himself and his companions as "competent as ministers of a new covenant (testament)..."

In each instance the Greek word used is *diatheke* which commentators already quoted translate covenant. Interestingly, there is an instance in Revelation where Jesus himself uses the word testimony in its true meaning (Rev:22:16). The Greek word used here is *martureo* which means to testify. The Old Testament, therefore, is the Old *diatheke*, the New Testament the New *diatheke*. The Book of Mormon, on the other hand is no *diatheke* but a *martureo*, and cannot, then be another Testament.

ANTI-MORMON?

Finally, the fore-mentioned correspondent kindly defined for us "anti-Mormon", a term with which many of us are very familiar.

Are you in opposition to Mormon doctrine? Have you not established an entire "ministry" for the purpose of "exposing" or "witnessing" against the

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UNITARIANS

ment to a relationship, death, or thanksgiving for a life of significance. As we are not bound to particular forms of service, we are able to make these special services personal to the needs and values of the people involved. The nearest minister or qualified lay-person is usually willing to provide these services to non-Unitarians."

The life of a Unitarian is lived by good ideals and sayings rather than knowledge of Jesus Christ in their lives. Reason would always be central to their lives and not faith at all. Their 'code of conduct' would be drawn from the best of all world religions including humanism. Indeed the humanistic idea of reason is supreme and would be always heeded instead of the 'idolatries of the mind and

doctrines of the LDS Church? Does that not, in fact, make you an "anti-Mormon" in the same sense that such activities, directed against Jewish people, for instance, would make one "anti-Semitic"? If you do not like the title...a very pertinent question to ponder might be, "Why do I do those things that quite appropriately earn me that title"?

ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

Of course given this definition of an "anti-Mormon," we could ask any Mormon a couple of revealing questions. In defining the term he writes:

Are you in opposition to Mormon doctrine? Have you not established an entire "ministry" for the purpose of "exposing" or "witnessing" against the doctrines of the LDS Church? Does that not, in fact, make you an "anti-Mormon" in the same sense that such activities, directed against Jewish people, for instance, would make one "anti-Semitic"?

By this definition he very clearly labels all Mormons as "anti-Christian." After all, are they not in opposition to orthodox Christian doctrine? Have they not established an entire ministry for the purpose of exposing or witnessing against the Christian doctrines which conflict with Mormonism? Have not their own church leaders consistently attacked every piece of doctrine be-

spirit' as one statement of faith put it.

Whereas one would not doubt that many Unitarians seek to live a life of help and comfort to their fellow men there is no true acceptance of the Living God that told us to love the Lord our God before He said to love our neighbour.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen from above there is a vast difference between the gospel of Unitarianism and the true Gospel of Christianity. Anyone relying on the above system for salvation will find that they have no hope of eternal life with the God they say they believe in.

The clear difference between true Christians and Unitarians is summed up by Cliff Reed in his book, *Unitarian, What's That?*

lied by Christians on every fundamental of the gospel? Have not Mormons labelled Christianity "a perfect pack of nonsense...[and] as corrupt as hell"; "nothing less than the 'whore of Babylon' whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornications and wickednesses."? (Quotes from John Taylor, 3rd Mormon prophet and Mormon apostle, Orson Pratt).

One correspondent sent us a very helpful definition of an anti-Mormon.

"Anti-Mormon" = anyone who has the audacity to ask that Mormons make a credible presentation of their doctrine that does not conflict with previous Mormon teachings and conforms to the teachings of the Bible.

(end of article)

As to whether any Unitarian, or anyone else, is a Christian is really for that person to decide. From the earliest days of the Church there have been many different ideas about what being a Christian means. Much suffering has been caused by the resultant disputes, persecutions and wars. This sad record has led some Unitarians to regard the term "Christian" with disfavour. For them it is too hung about with unacceptable baggage to be worth retaining. There are also those who simply do not base their belief system on the Christian tradition. Some of these define their position as religious humanist. Others favour a broader theism, an earth-centred spirituality or a faith that draws principally on religions other than Christianity. However, Unitarians generally hold Jesus in high regard. We

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WATCH THE TOWER

graphical move after my marriage and I approached the committee at my local Kingdom Hall and explained my disfellowshipped state. The "solution" was coldly explained to me. I must enter the Kingdom Hall just as the meeting began and sit in the back row. I must not speak to any one and must now allow any one to speak to me. If I was approached, I should explain that I was in a disfellowshipped state. For a full year, I attended all meetings following the instructions earning my redemption. During this time, I learned later, a sister had asked the elders if she could approach me with encouragement. Her request was refused.

I was now a fully accredited Witness again but though very relieved, I was not happy. It did not occur to me that I should be. Leading the life required by the organisation was no easier than it had been earlier. Determined not to put a foot wrong this time, I threw myself into meetings and the "ministry" work, taking my little children with me in order to inculcate Witness teachings and practices into them. My husband would have nothing to do with the strange religion his wife was practising and objected to my constant absences, but I was hell-bent in becoming the perfect Jehovah's Witness. About this time, a rumour ran through the congregation concerning various bedroom practices engaged in by married Witnesses. It was hinted darkly that such practices were forbidden. I had no idea what was meant but so frightened was I of offending Jehovah I made excuses not to sleep with my husband. The inevitable happened and my husband began seeing some one else. I cared little - he had become superfluous in my quest to placate God. We eventually separated and I returned to my hometown.

Renting a large and dilapidated old house, I joined my local congregation. I had always laboured in the belief that I would never be good enough to associate with my brothers and sisters, and I would arrive quietly and try to merge into the background just as the meeting began and leave as soon as the final prayer was offered. I made few friends except one rather determined sister who enrolled me in the Ministry School where I always took the part of the "householder," who had little to say. The appearances on the platform always unnerved me and although I joined my brothers and sisters almost daily for the door-to-door work, I often collected a territory map and worked by myself, putting in pioneer hours. However, I was approached and encouraged to offer accommodation to the special pioneer sisters who were assigned to our congregation. At this time Jehovah's Witnesses were not as well known as they are today, and special pioneers would arrive to help cover the territory. These young women spent many hours a day preaching "on the doors" and received a small monthly allowance. I felt privileged to have been singled out for this honour - it did not occur to me that no one else had volunteered. There was no bathroom and no hot water in the house, but I very happily undertook to provide hot meals and laundry for the two pioneers, who paid me 30 shillings each week towards the cost. Life was very hard but I felt Jehovah would look kindly on me for my efforts in caring for these young women. The pioneers were collected regularly and driven to meetings, but there was no room in the car for me and I walked for some miles with my children in a pushchair to get to meetings. I felt no rancour for this - pioneers were special people. The Tuesday book study was also held at my house and I provided refreshments

for a dozen or so Witnesses each week for several years.

An odd incident occurred during the stay of one set of pioneers, who were with me for six months at a time. One of them began missing small items of clothing and became convinced that demonic activity was at work. True, it was an old and unfriendly house we all lived in, but I could not imagine a demon being interested in odd socks! Nonetheless, the congregation servant was duly summoned along with some elders, who prayed in the house for the demonic activity to stop. I was embarrassed and felt to blame somehow for all this, but I had my own suspicions. My young son was asthmatic and in inclement weather, I would leave him with a baby-sitter whilst I attended meetings. The baby-sitter, a teenage girl, was known locally for helping herself to what she could find and when I later saw her wearing a sweater belonging to the pioneer, I felt relieved, though I said nothing. Some Witnesses looked at me askance at meetings and it was quite an uncomfortable time. The Society makes much of "opposition from Satan" and several Witnesses I know claim to have experienced demonic activity.

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UNITARIANS

favour a simple and inclusive definition of the word Christian. Thus a Christian is any person who seeks to live in accord with the life and teachings of Jesus, who identifies with what is best in the Christian tradition, and who, perhaps, sees in Jesus a revelation of the God who is immanent in all people. This is the well-spring of love that permeated his nature

and his ministry. In this sense, many Unitarians are Christians. And we also recognise as such all who share the same spirit, whatever their position on the Christian theological spectrum.

(end of article)

COONEYITES

BACKGROUND

In reality, there should be no title to this article, as this group really has no name. Cooneyites is a nickname from one of their early leaders and this is the one we will mainly use here.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the evangelical Faith Mission sent William Irvine to lead work at Menagh in County Tipperary, Ireland. He gathered a few converts around him and held meetings in local Methodist churches. Irvine had originally been helped in good faith but he ended up gathering the local believers round himself as a special leader and then began denouncing all other Bible denominations.

Irvine was fascinated by what Jesus told his first disciples in Matthew 10 and developed a band of followers, who went out in twos preaching his views, living in poverty, with only one change of clothes and no money. In 1900 the Faith Mission disassociated itself from Irvine when he continued to teach his new converts to break away totally from world.

They felt that due to their obedience to the "Jesus Way," they were the *only* ones able to fulfil the true pattern of the original disciples on earth, and so they had to be the *only* True Church. As a result, they insisted that they should have no name and ever since names have been assigned to them, these include Cooneyites, Go-Preachers and 2x2's.

As Irvine's following grew, he developed a powerful system of overseers for each local group, with Irvine becoming their travelling leader, speaking to scattered conventions of believers/followers. Followers sold all that they had and gave the proceeds to Irvine. By 1908, Irvine insisted that all his followers must become 'homeless' ministers.

Edward Cooney rose from within the group to assist Irvine. He proved to be an impressive and zealous leader, who gave up his ordinary job to become a "tramp preacher." He made scathing attacks on other churches and ended up encouraging followers to have nothing to do with them at all.

Irvine's teachings did not stand still and he developed strange doctrines, partly under the influence of Seventh Day Adventists. At one stage, Irvine literally believed himself to be one of the two witnesses referred to in Revelation 3.

Some of his fellow leaders became so alarmed at this that they formed a coalition to stifle him and in 1914 Irvine was excommunicated

All this threw the movement into turmoil, it was then that Edward Cooney and others took control. However even Cooney himself was disfellowshipped in 1928. This led to a cover up of how the group started and today followers are discouraged from investigating the early history of the Movement, as they might rake up Irvine's delusions of grandeur and the early overseers dirty power struggles. On this score, the movement is quite well protected, as there are no historical papers or diaries and the control of the local overseers remains overriding.

BELIEFS

There is no 'statement of faith' or clear doctrinal book for this group but the message they give and the lifestyle lived indicates the following.

- They believe that they are the only true church and all others are false. They are a direct historical continuation of New Testament Christianity.
- They are very unclear in their teaching as to whether Jesus is God or not. Jesus to them is the perfect example - someone to build the pattern of their lives on.
- Salvation comes to us not through grace alone but self-effort is also needed. Salvation can never be a certainty as it will only be decided at the moment of death and there is certainly no hope of salvation outside of their community.
- Very little attention is paid to the shed blood and finished work of Christ. They quote Acts 1:1 and

say that they are continuing the work that He began.

- Membership to the group is not so much by an inward receiving of Christ as Saviour but more of an outward conformity to their lifestyle. As such, there is extreme legalism in many areas and a lack of desire to discover the truth of scripture.

PRACTICE

The main way that most people encounter this group is when they take one of their meetings in the locality. This will have no specific name attached but usually the invitation will give the group away. It will be very plain giving the time of the service, the names of the preachers and insisting that the group is "undenominational".

The preachers might visit local churches when they arrive in a place. They will sit through the service and then give out leaflets afterwards. They would usually refuse hospitality, are eager to get away and reluctant to give information.

Their meetings are usually full of people of all ages, with all the men in suits and ties; and the women modestly but neatly dressed all with their hair in buns and without hats. They would often travel from quite a distance.

The following is a first hand experience from someone who visited a meeting held in Surrey in February 2000.

On entering the village hall, I received a curt welcome and was handed a copy of Hymns Old & New (1987 edition). Some of these hymns were familiar but others were quite unknown. Two young lady preachers led the meeting. They rose and one gave a few words of welcome. A hymn was announced and sung seated. They prayed using "King James' English."

One preacher then read from Luke 8 (King James Version - a good number of folk followed in their Bibles) and spoke on Jesus' parable of the sower. Much emphasis was made on Jesus being the one who helps us understand

about eternal life. When we listen to God's gospel we need to remember it; our hearts must not resist it if we want to bear fruit; we need Jesus and his salvation in our hearts and lives. Good hearts are those that listen to God's gospel.

What matters is the state of our heart as we listen to the gospel. Our hearts need to feel we need God; we need His help and strength; we need Him to show us the way to heaven. We need to feel God teaching us, so the gospel can grow in us. Although what is happening now may seem insignificant, our honest hearts can grow.

There is so much power in God's word to change us if we only admit it. We need God to prepare our hearts and plant the gospel in them and he wants to make our hearts soft and needy. Therefore, the seed of the gospel of the life of Jesus can grow in us and make us more effective in him. We need to know God's softness in our hearts; we need His word to grow in us and to have an effect in us.

After another hymn and a prayer, the second preacher read a second Bible passage from John 4. The Samaritan woman did not know Jesus at the beginning, but she did at the end of her meeting with Him. Therefore, we need God to work in us by Jesus. We need to receive life from God when the voice of Jesus speaks to us and makes us alive to God. Jesus did not reveal Himself to the woman straightaway. She could have gone away and not have been saved. We too must learn to know more and not go away.

When the Samaritan woman heard Jesus talk about living water, she could have left the matter and become stuck - but, no, she came through. Jesus needs to speak to us and we need to love him. God sent Jesus to allow us to find Him for eternal life. Jesus loved the Samaritan woman but he did not tell her this. She had to listen to Him and learn from Him, so that He could help her one step at a time.

Now the woman came to know Jesus and she shared this with others. The more they listened, the more they understood, the more they loved and the more they saw they needed to respond to Jesus. Do you love Jesus? Has Jesus

revealed Himself to you? We can know Him; we can have the experience of being born again. We need to be honest with God and be just as we are. We need to confess we do not know Jesus and we need to come to find Him and love Him.

The meeting closed with a prayer and the room was tidied and vacated. Group members spoke amongst themselves. One man greeted me and commented on the weather. As I left, one of the preachers said she was pleased I came. I asked her whether I should read the Bible, if I wanted to know more about Jesus. She said: Yes, this is the only literature we use. I did not comment about their leaflets or their hymnbook.

The Cooneyites' outreach style seems to be aimed at Christians and not unsaved folk and has the usual cult mixture of some truth freely sprinkled with error, ready to snare the unwary. They remain separate and exclusive from other church groups. They are trained never to enter into any prolonged discussion of what is right or wrong in Christian matters. They never argue and never take literature from others. They have a constant air of "humble superiority" and usually refuse to give any name to their group, merely smiling smugly whenever they are asked.

Their meetings and lifestyle seem to lack any true joy, life and enthusiasm.

CONCLUSION

Cooneyites just seem to be mechanistic, joyless religious people, who believe that their "Jesus Way" is the only means of getting right with God.

The testimonies of ex-Cooneyites who have drifted away or been disfellowshipped for some minor offence confirm the Group exists under extreme legalism. Their claim to be exclusive makes them a cult:

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 - And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness, their end will be what their actions deserve. (NIV)

The teachings from these True-Preachers have to be held as absolute

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Doug's Diary

Doug Harris will be involved in training at the following seminars. Others may have been added since publication. Please ring Head Office for further details. Those marked * may have a restricted attendance.

If there is not a venue near you but you feel that your area would benefit from a seminar, contact Head Office to talk about organising one.

The following dates have been confirmed but there are others awaiting final agreement.

SEPTEMBER

- 10 Dagenham
- 11 Southampton Team *
- 16-17 Wirral
- 18 Romsey
- 19 Battersea

OCTOBER

- 6 Berwick???????
- 8 York
- 13 SE London
- 14 Welwyn Garden City
- 15 SE London
- 22 Richmond, Surrey
- 26-28 Manchester CRE

NOVEMBER

- 3 Inverness *
- 4 AIness - NE Scotland
- 5 Donnoch -- NE Scotland
- 11 West Bromwich
- 12 Dagenham
- 17-19 ANNUAL CONVENTION
- 25 Wolverhampton

God in Three Persons

In dealing with the cults perhaps the subject for which we are called to give an *apologia* more than any other is that of God's nature. Without exception, the traditional Trinitarian view is rejected, often ridiculed, by the cults. There are three simple points I wish to make concerning the way we think about God, especially when speaking to a cultist.

1. God is a mystery

This may seem obvious, but consider the objections raised against the Trinity doctrine. Surely the most popular one is that it is hard to understand. In their book *Reasoning from the Scriptures* Jehovah's Witnesses criticise early church councils for describing the Godhead as "incomprehensible." Quoting the words of Jesus in John 4:22 "We worship what we know," they insist that God is no mystery to the true believer.

Of course, there is much about God that we do know and understand because God, in his infinite grace, has chosen to reveal himself to us, through his creation, through prophets and, finally, through His Son (Romans 1:19-20; Hebrews 1:1-2). But however much we know, or think we know, it is well to remember that although "*He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end*" (Eccle.3:11). Paul, in his letter to the Romans declared, "*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?*" (Romans 11:33-34). In presenting my *apologia*, or "reasoned defence", of the Trinity I always find it useful to start by showing that if there are things about God that we cannot understand we are in good company.

2. The Revelation of God is an unfolding Revelation

As we have already noted, God's revelation of himself unfolds as he reveals himself through creation (Romans 1:19-20); through prophets, and finally through his Son (Hebrews 1: 1-2; John 14:9). To start with the idea of the Trin-

ity and work backwards is problematic because we can be accused of reading things into Scripture (eisegesis) instead of taking our doctrine from Scripture (exegesis). By the same token, to say that we do not understand, and therefore it cannot be true, is also to read back into Scripture our conclusions instead of seeing what the Bible has to say. It is important that we avoid these two errors, don't you agree? The New Testament writers and early church leaders did not have a complete and polished view of Jesus as God, but "discovered" the Trinity as they thought about the undeniable witness of Jesus' life, ministry, death, burial and resurrection, and the claims he made for himself. If we start where they started and travel the same road of discovery we will likely arrive where they arrived. Isn't it good that we have found a way to avoid reading things in to the Bible?

3. In Jesus we see God's clearest revelation of Himself.

As Jews, the first Christians would have known the words of Deut.6:4, "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*". They would have been familiar with the great prayer of Nehemiah chapter 9, one of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible. It is a prayer of confession and repentance; a prayer that describes the God of Israel, his character, grace and power. As we consider the God of Israel and the person of Jesus we find some remarkable parallels.

On one occasion Jesus was walking through the cornfields on the Sabbath. - Matthew 12:1-8

Jesus often referred to himself as "The Son of Man." And here he is declaring himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. But in Nehemiah 9:14 we read, "You made known to them your holy Sabbath..." It is the Sabbath of Israel's Redeemer/God. Jesus is Lord of God's Sabbath.

When Jesus was approaching the hour for which he came into the world, the time when he would be taken from his disciples, he made them a special promise. - John 15:26

In Nehemiah 9:20 we read, "You gave your good Spirit to instruct them." It is the Spirit of Israel's Redeemer/God, sent by God to lead God's people in God's ways. Here Jesus is saying, "I will send the Spirit of truth...he will testify of **me**"

In Nehemiah 9:30 we read "By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets."

After his resurrection Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were puzzled by recent events in Jerusalem. In Luke 24:27 we read "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself."

Here we see that God's prophets, sent to lead God's people in God's ways, "all the prophets" spoke of Jesus.

In Nehemiah 9:7 we read of Israel's Redeemer/God, "You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham."

John 8: 51-58 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this they picked up stones to stone him.

Here we have Jesus apparently claiming to have existed before Abraham was born. Abraham, to whom God gave the name Abraham. Here, and again in John 8: 24, he is applying the name of God to himself. I am, is the name of God, that he revealed to Moses, as we read in Exodus 3:14

What are we to make of these claims Jesus made for himself? Where did his authority, that so impressed his hearers, come from? 'Where did this man get these things?' They asked. 'What is this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son...?' You can understand their confusion, can't you?

In Nehemiah 9:6 we read,

"You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry hosts, the earth and all

that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.”

In John 5: 21,26 we find Jesus claiming to give life and to have life in himself, and in John 10: 22-30 “I give them eternal life” Jesus is the life-giver - a role reserved for God alone.

As monotheists the first Christians would have found the very idea of Jesus being God unacceptable. Yet, when they thought about what he said and did, the evidence of his life seemed to challenge their traditional views. What were they to make of these claims by Jesus to be Lord of the Sabbath, God's Sabbath; giver of the Spirit, God's Spirit; focus of the prophets, God's chosen prophets; to be the life-giver, and even the great I am? Is Jesus God? He certainly is not the Father. That much is clear from the relationship he has with the Father. One of the objections raised by those who reject the orthodox view of the Trinity is that Jesus cannot be God because if he was he would have been praying to himself. And Jesus certainly prayed to the Father. But he speaks like God, acts like God, and declares, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." What were those first disciples to make of him?

The inevitable conclusion is perhaps best summed up in the opening words of John's gospel: John 1:1-4, 14. So we have the Father and the Son. God the Father and God the Son.

Having accomplished what he came to do, Jesus returned to the Father, to sit

down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. But before he went Jesus promised two things (1) Matt.28:20 I will be with you always; (2) John 14: 15-18 I will give you another Counsellor - the Spirit of truth. Another Counsellor here means "Another of the same kind" "Another like me.”

The Spirit would lead the disciples into all truth. Here is the guiding force of the future church. But who is the Spirit? Well we have already seen that he is “Another like me.” 1 Corinthians 2:17 declares, "Now the Lord is the Spirit.” Is the Spirit God? Verse 6 makes plain that "the Spirit gives life.” Who alone gives life? And, just as we saw with Jesus, the Bible ascribes to the Spirit all the characteristic of Godhood. He is omnipresent - Psalm 139:7-10; All knowing - Isaiah 40:13-14; Sovereign - 1 Corinthians 12:11; Eternal - Hebrews 9:14.

Jesus said that the Spirit "will be in you" (John 14:17). In 1 Cor.3:16 we read, “God's Spirit lives in you”...and again in 2 Cor.6:16 “We are the temple of the living God” c.f. Ephesians 2:21-22.

So we have Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

How are we meant to think about these things?

The Bible makes it clear that God is one. That there is one God, and only one God. Jesus himself taught Deut.6:4

"Hear O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Mark 12:29. Yet the Bible also clearly shows a plurality in God's being. That is there is one God, but there are three persons who are God. There is one God. This one God has a plural nature. This one God is called the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, all distinct personalities, all called God.

One commentator has said:

"The doctrine of the Trinity is not 'irrational'; what is irrational is to suppress the biblical evidence for Trinity in favour of unity"

In other words, just because we cannot fully comprehend what scripture is telling us we should not reject what scripture is telling us.

Is this evidence conclusive? For many probably not, but given the standard set by Doug in the first article in this series, I believe it proves the case beyond any reasonable doubt. As Doug also pointed out, our reasoned presentation of the case is simply a framework that accommodates the study of these things. It is the work of God, the Holy Spirit to open hearts, convince and convict. As we present, then, we must also pray for hearts to be opened and lives transformed by a growing knowledge of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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(Continued from page 13)

COONEYITES

truth and any questions or doubts are frowned upon and could be viewed as disobedience. Another sign of cultic tendencies.

Their convictions about Overseer control and about their sole correct interpretation of the Bible also reflect a cult. This goes hand in hand with their refusal to extend God's salvation to anyone believing in Jesus Christ *outside* of their Group.

The regular members of ordinary Cooneyites must contain many honest-hearted people who really try to love God and do their best to serve Him. As such, we must pray to meet them individ-

ually and to seek to befriend them and win them for Christ.

(end of article)

STATEMENT

We have some questions about the article we included last issue on Benny Hinn's wife. We consider carefully all that goes into this newsletter and we are

sorry if we offended anybody. However in doing this we are not pointing an accusing finger but instead bringing information that needs to be considered about a ministry that is accepted by many Christians today.

The Hinn's are very public in their belief that they are God's servants preaching the true Word of God. We therefore as a group whose mission statement includes "upholding the truth" need to sensitively but correctly aware our concerns also in public. Things that are done publicly must also be dealt with publicly whereas if something is private it can be dealt with that way.

I hope our readers understand our true concerns and motivation even if not always agreeing 100% with us.

CHEERFUL GIVING

As many will be aware new legislation came into force in April 2000 whereby we can reclaim any tax that you have paid on the amount of your gifts no matter how small providing you instruct us to treat them as gift aid donations.

All regular donors have received such forms as below but we wondered if this would be an opportunity for others to consider making a one off gift or indeed a regular small donation to the work of Reachout Trust.

We need your help right now - if you have never given to Reachout Trust before would you consider making at least a sacrificial once-off gift to help this vital work expand with future publications and increased presence on the WorldWide Web. Of course if you could give regularly we would be delighted.

If you are eligible please could we encourage you to complete the form below (you can photostat the page) by ticking the appropriate boxes, deleting the * inappropriate words and sending it with your gift to **REACHOUT TRUST 24 ORMOND ROAD RICHMOND SURREY TW10 6TH**. Do not worry if your circumstances might change in the future because you can withdraw this authority at any time by simply writing to us. Many Thanks.

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